

## **Owen Lovejoy Homestead**

Peru Street (U.S. Route 6)

Princeton

From 1856 until 1864, this property was the home of Owen Lovejoy (1811-64), abolitionist and U.S. representative, who dedicated his life to ending slavery. Lovejoy was born on June 6, 1811, in Kennebec County, Maine. He was the fifth of seven children born to farmer and Congregational minister Daniel B. Lovejoy and his wife. Owen Lovejoy journeyed to Alton, Illinois, at the age of 25 to work with his brother Elijah Lovejoy. Elijah published a newspaper, which he had recently moved to Alton from St. Louis, Missouri.

In St. Louis Elijah Lovejoy's antislavery position had made him extremely unpopular with local residents. In 1836 a mob destroyed his press, forcing him to move across the Mississippi River to the free state of Illinois. His move was to no avail, however, and on November 7, 1837, Elijah Lovejoy was killed while defending his press from mob violence. At Elijah Lovejoy's death, Owen Lovejoy swore to dedicate his life to the antislavery cause.

Owen Lovejoy soon became active in the Underground Railroad, establishing his house in Princeton, where he was then living, as a principle depot in Illinois. Aided by his brother Joseph, Owen Lovejoy wrote *Memoir of the Reverend Elijah P. Lovejoy; Who Was Murdered in Defense of the Liberty of the Press at Alton, Illinois, November 7, 1837*. This volume became an important piece of antislavery propaganda.

In 1854, after several unsuccessful campaigns for state office, Owen Lovejoy was elected to the state legislature. In 1857 he was elected to the U. S. Congress, where he campaigned fiercely for the abolitionist cause. On December 14, 1863, Lovejoy introduced a universal emancipation bill that, after much revision and amendment, provided the essence of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which was not finally adopted until a year after his death on March 25, 1864. His body was returned to Princeton after his death, and he was buried in the nearby Oakdale Cemetery. [B 5/24/73, 73000690]